



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

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COUNTY TO DISTRIBUTE 70,000 MORE MENTAL HEALTH FOTONOVELAS *Fotonovela Seeks to Engage Latinos and Encourage Them to Seek Help*

The demand for the mental health [fotonovela](#) was so great the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) is printing an additional 70,000 copies which will be available throughout the region starting March 22.

Fotonovelas are extremely popular among Latinos. A *fotonovela* is a booklet with pictures and dialogue boxes that often tell a dramatic story with a moral lesson.

The 40,000 bilingual *fotonovelas* of [Salir Adelante](#): *Cómo una familia aprende sobre la salud mental* (Moving Forward: How a Family Learns About Mental Health) were distributed across the county and were all gone in no time after their release in November.

"It's encouraging that so many people in the community are partnering with the County on this critically important outreach effort," said County Supervisor Greg Cox, District 1. "Hopefully, the *fotonovelas* will help people talk with their friends and loved ones about their mental health troubles and get them the help they need."

The additional 70,000 *fotonovelas* will be available at 90 locations in the region, including County libraries, mental health centers, family resource centers, schools, and the six Northgate Markets throughout the county.

In [Salir Adelante](#), a Latino family knows that something is wrong with Maria Ester, the main character. However, Maria Ester and her husband Luis are hesitant to get help due to shame and fear that people will think she is crazy. Luis' mother, Doña Prudencia, consults with the family priest and convinces her son to talk to his wife and encourage Maria Ester to seek help. She does.

"The Building Better Health component of Live Well, San Diego! details the need to address the whole health of a person," said Nick Macchione, HHS Director. "This includes a person's mental health."

The fear of rejection and discrimination, coupled with shame and self-stigma, are some of the barriers that prevent Latinos with a mental disorder from accessing needed mental health services. Many Latinos view a mental disorder as a personal weakness.

It is estimated that one in four Latino adults in San Diego County are likely to experience major depression or another mental disorder during any given year. However, stigma, culture and language barriers keep many from seeking treatment.

HHS published the [fotonovela](#) to educate Latinos about mental health and encourage them to seek treatment. Funding for the publication came from the Mental Health Services Act.

"Having a mental illness is not a character flaw," said Piedad Garcia, Ed.D., LCSW, Director of the County's Adult and Older Adult Mental Health Services. "We want Latinos with a mental health challenge to know that we are here to help. Treatment is available and people can and do recover."

People suffering from a mental illness can access services by calling the County's 24-hour, multi-lingual Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.

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